

**THE MERCK MANUAL OF DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPY**—9th Edition—Editorial Board: Charles E. Lyght, M.D., Editor; William P. Boger, M.D., George A. Carden, M.D., Augustus Gibson, M.D., Dickinson W. Richards, M.D. Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N. J., 1956. 1870 pages, Regular Edition: \$6.75 (Fabrikoid binding), DeLuxe Edition: \$9.00 (flexible Cordoba Fabrikoid binding with gold edged pages).

The opening sentence of the Foreword states that "Ever since publication of the first edition in 1899 the Merck Manual has been designed to provide physicians with reliable, up-to-date medical information in convenient, concise, yet adequate form." Over 100 leading clinicians, who remain anonymous except for the five member editorial board contribute to "the exacting task of presenting the latest medical progress and currently accepted practice." Few single volume medical compendiums more nearly approach the above ideal for this ninth edition, yet it is an exaggeration to suggest that the information is adequate. The ninth edition of 1870 pages is not larger in content than the eighth edition of 1592 pages since it has fewer words per line and fewer lines per page, due to increased spacing between letters, words and lines; in fact there are approximately 20,000 fewer words. The paper also is thinner.

The contents are divided into three parts. Part I supplies basic information concerning the nature of diseases from Allergy to Venereal, with diagnostic procedures, treatment and a list of prescriptions for each disease or disease category. There is even a section on obstetrics with an outline of pre- and postnatal care, threatened abortion and the conduct of a normal delivery. The section on physical and chemical etiology discusses burns, sunburn, heat stroke, radiation sickness and chemical poisoning in carefully selected, brief statements; a few errors, such as the omission of methylene blue as an agent for treating methemoglobinemia and the use of dimercaprol rather than its glycoside for cadmium poisoning should be corrected.

Part II includes various general and specific directions for managing the sick and Part III is the index.

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**ULTRAMICRO METHODS**—For Clinical Laboratories—Edwin M. Knights, Jr., M.D., Associate Pathologist, Director of Clinical Pathology and Blood Bank; Roderick P. MacDonald, Ph.D., Director of Clinical Chemistry; and Jaan Ploompui, Chief, Division of Ultramicro Chemistry, all of Harper Hospital, Detroit. Grune & Stratton, New York, 1957. 128 pages, \$4.75.

The development of practical methods for analyses of the chemical constituents of blood and urine has contributed immeasurably to the diagnosis and treatment of disease. However, the number and frequency of the determinations which can be made on the blood may be seriously limited by the amounts of sample required. This limitation is most evident in pediatric practice but it may well be a factor in the management of other patients in whom repeated venipuncture is difficult or undesirable. Consequently, there is increasing demand for analytical methods for use on blood, which require such small samples that the blood may be obtained by pricking the heel or finger. Such "ultramicro" methods permit the measurement of microgram (0.001 mg.) or microliter (0.001 ml.) quantities of material. An individual test may require only 0.01 to 0.03 ml. of serum and 0.2 to 0.3 ml. of blood thus suffices for the determination of several different substances.

In this book, detailed and specific directions are given for the determination of the electrolytes of the blood—sodium, potassium, calcium, chlorides, phosphate, and carbon dioxide combining power—and for certain organic compounds which are most frequently requested. These latter include urea nitrogen, glucose, cholesterol, and the serum proteins. Methods are also given for acid and alkaline phosphatase,

bilirubin, icterus index, and thymol turbidity and cephalin flocculation tests. There is also a section on what is termed "electrochromatography" which deals with electrophoretic determination of serum protein fractions on filter paper but which, unfortunately, neglects the use of this same technique for the identification of the abnormal hemoglobins. Other methods described are the C-reactive protein test, microflocculation tests for syphilis, and microhematocrits. The determination of chlorides and of protein in spinal fluid is also included.

The first section of the book is devoted to a discussion of the necessary steps in setting up an ultramicro chemical section in the general clinical laboratory including a listing of the special apparatus required. Attention is devoted to the collection of blood and the pipetting of samples. Each chemical method which is subsequently described is treated by, first, a brief discussion of the principles which underlie the method, then a list of the required apparatus and reagents, followed by the details of the procedure including calculation of the results and the normal values to be expected. A useful discussion and specific references for each procedure are to be found at the end of each method. The book contains a number of illustrations and its printing and general format are very satisfactory. It should serve very adequately as a guide in the clinical laboratory desirous of establishing an ultramicro section for analyses of blood and spinal fluid.

HAROLD A. HARPER, Ph.D.

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**ALCOHOLISM**—Edited by George N. Thompson, A.B., M.D., F.A.C.P., Associate Clinical Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, 1956. 548 pages, \$9.50.

The whole subject of alcoholism, chronic and acute, is covered by this book. The field is very broad, ranging from sociology to chemistry, and for this reason has been properly assigned to a number of contributors. Thus there is a considerable difference in adequacy of coverage in the various fields, which is inescapable in this type of treatment of a subject. Especially to be commended are the chapters on the Pharmacology of Alcohol by Harger, and Alcohol and Brain Physiology by Himwich; the book would be well worth while if it contained nothing else. It is to be recommended for careful reading by all physicians who have any contact with alcoholics, which in the last analysis means all physicians.

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**THE PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE**—William R. Laird, M.D., Education Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., P. O. Box 1167, Charleston 24, West Virginia. 64 pages, \$3.00.

This is a rather interesting compilation of quotations from famous men, and from others less famous, combined with a personal statement of one man's concept of the practice of medicine.

Most of the quotations are well known by most doctors and the altruistic attitude of the author in regard to medicine is that of most doctors.

Many of the author's conclusions concerning the value of statistics and minutely detailed records and the need for universal autopsy in all deaths will be discounted by many of our excellent physicians and pathologists.

The author's eulogy of some men as benefactors and noble statesmen will not be appreciated entirely by all readers. Some of the men whose names are mentioned do qualify but other names fall short of the target.

The book adds little to the knowledge and philosophy of the educated doctor. It will be misinterpreted in many aspects by the nonmedically trained casual reader.